

TRANSCRIPT OF BROADCAST

By
Fulton Lewis, Jr.

Station WGMS at 7-7:15 P.M.
16 January 1958

Ordinarily, Ladies and Gentlemen, as you well know, I do not have guests on this program; but tonight I am departing from that rule because of a very pertinent witness in our pursuit of the facts about the Crusade for Freedom and Radio Free Europe and what really is happening in the propaganda operations to the people behind the iron curtain. This guest is a former member of the House of Representatives, Representative Charles J. Kersten of Milwaukee who was chairman of the House Select Committee on Communist aggression in 1953 and '54. And in the course of that experience he devoted much of his time to a study of the Free Europe operation and surrounding facts and a substantial amount on the actual scene of operations in Europe.

Lewis: Now Mr. Kersten, you also later, I believe, were on the staff at the White House.

Kersten: Yes, I was a consultant on psychological warfare under Mr. Nelson Rockefeller.

Lewis: You had occasion to see the Radio Free Europe operation on the scene in Europe?

Kersten: Yes, I saw a great deal of the Radio Free Europe operation, and as a matter of fact, Radio Free Europe broadcast the hearings of our committee on Communist aggression. Our committee, in its reports, commended Radio Free Europe for broadcasting these hearings of numerous escapee anti-Communist witnesses, and we recommended increased public support for both Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America. This was in the hope that they would continue to broadcast truly anti-Communist and pro-freedom programs to support the expressions of the President and the Secretary of State for the freedom of the captive nations.

Lewis: Now, what hearings were these, sir?

Kersten: These were the hearings of people who were firsthand witnesses to the Communist take-over of the now captive nations, such as Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and so forth.

Lewis: Alright, Sir, go ahead.

Kersten: Now, the majority of our witnesses were recent escapees from every walk of life. The purpose of the inquiry of our committee was to investigate the method of take-over of the nations by the Communists, and then determine what happened to the mass of the people remaining in these countries.

Lewis: Now, Sir, did you find any general pattern in the method of take-over by the Communists?

Kersten: It was clear, from all the nations. It was a clear pattern. In the first place, the Communists used the Socialist and pro-Communist elements in each of these nations who sought to collaborate with them, and in this collaboration the Communists of course took over, and in the process they destroyed many of these collaborators, and many of these collaborators escaped into Western Europe. The experience of each of these nations after the Communist regimes came to power was almost identical.

Lewis: Now, what was that experience?

Kersten: Into the Communist regimes came control over every important element of society, both government and non-government, such as the professions, education, agriculture, labor unions, businesses, churches, and every organization of the country.

Lewis: Now, Sir, what happened to the political collaborators who fled these countries?

Kersten: Many of them, Mr. Lewis, remained in Western Europe and some of them were later employed by Radio Free Europe. This was particularly true in the case of Czechoslovakia.

Lewis: Ferdinand Perutka, for example?

Kersten: Perutka would be one, yes.

Lewis: Perutka now being the head of the Czechoslovakian desk of Radio Free Europe. What about Hubert Ripka?

Kersten: Mr. Ripka was another.

Lewis: Now Mr. Kersten, I'm interested in getting a true perspective on the extent of this, shall we say infiltration, of Radio Free Europe. I note that you say some of these leaders were picked up by Radio Free Europe. I assume that there were so many of them that Radio Free Europe obviously could not absorb all of them.

Kersten: Well, I don't know what percentage of them were picked up and employed.

Lewis: Well, that really, Sir, is not my point. My real point is not the percentage of the refugee politicians that were picked up, but what portion of the people who were employed by Radio Free Europe were refugee politicians?

Kersten: Well, I guess that's best answered by the fact that these were the people who influenced much of the policy of Radio Free Europe.

Lewis: From that time on, now, Sir, what was the basic policy of Radio Free Europe, as it finally went out from the actual radio transmitters to the people behind the iron curtain?

Kersten: The basic policy, I believe, might best be described as an attempt to bring about an evolution of the Communist regime into something decent, rather than freedom from Communist party domination.

Lewis: In short evolution instead of revolution.

Kersten: Definitely, and that is the basic mistake of the policy planning. By that, I mean, they mistakenly believe they can persuade the Communist party regimes to become decent, representative governments of the people. No Communist, as you know, Mr. Lewis, ever becomes decent until he leaves the party.

Lewis: Yes, Sir. Now, I have reported over this microphone and in the press on several occasions that there was a specific directive or guidance, as they called it, instructing editors, broadcasters, and so forth to follow the propaganda line: that the way to ultimate freedom for these people is through Titoism. Attempts have been made to deny this. What would be your comment on the subject?

Kersten: I know that that was the policy. This is clear from the fact that the State Department has sought huge appropriations for Tito's government, and that occurring as frequent government foreign policy statements is the same idea of the evolution of Communist governments toward decency. This means, the hope that the Communist governments will evolve rather than be displaced and politically defeated. If we would help the enslaved nations bring about the political defeat of the Communist party, we would then come closer to a genuine coexistence, in truth, with the people of the suffering nations who hate Communists and Communist rule and, thus, eventually paralyze the ability of the Communists who make war between us.

Lewis: Now, in short under this policy, the name Radio Free Europe, and correct me if I'm wrong--I certainly do not want to lead you--the name Radio Free Europe is really a misnomer. Actually, it should be Radio Socialist Europe or Radio Titoist Europe.

Kersten: My thought, Mr. Lewis, is that it might more properly be termed Radio Coexistence. I believe that Radio Coexistence does not support the idea that has been frequently expressed by President Eisenhower as official American policy, the latest example of which was in his reply to Bulganin just four days ago when he wrote, and I quote: "The peoples of these countries should have the right to choose the form of government under which they live, and their right of free choice." End quote of the President.

Lewis: Do you feel, Sir, that the Radio Free Europe is promoting this free right of self-determination?

Kersten: No, the policy as expounded by Radio Free Europe is to persuade the people of the iron curtain from one form of Communism to another form of Communism, in the flimsy hope that somehow, eventually, it may lead to nothing worse than Socialism. I know that these people want no form of Communist government and no form of Marxian and Socialist government, certainly not

that insinuated upon them by Radio Free Europe, particularly by those who sold them out. They do not want to return to the old landlord days either. I do not know that they want the right of self-determination as expressed by the majority of all these peoples' time and again before our committee.

Lewis: The voice you've just been listening to, Ladies and Gentlemen, is that of former Representative Charles J. Kersten of Milwaukee, an expert and former investigator of Radio Free Europe.